

NSC BRIEFING

16 December 1959

LAOS

- I. Premier Phoui's ~~xxxxxx~~ exclusion of the reformist Committee for Defense of National Interests (CDNI) from his reorganized cabinet, announced on 15 December, may spell serious political instability for Laos.
 - A. Phoui's conservatives and CDNI "young Turks" have been in an uneasy coalition for over a year, but in recent weeks their basic differences have come to a head in the debate over the questions of whether to extend the mandate of the National Assembly, due to expire on 25 December; the timing of new elections; and the make-up of a strengthened cabinet which both sides agreed was badly needed.
 - B. Compromise of sorts was reached in early December when it was agreed that elections would be tentatively scheduled for April but that in the meantime the deputies would retain their individual mandates even though the assembly might be dissolved.
 - C. Both sides immediately began to wrangle over interpretation of this vague agreement, with Phoui claiming the mandate of the assembly would in fact extend until April, while the young Turks, seemingly backed by the king, insisted the assembly would cease to function on 25 December.
 - D. Phoui then proceeded to draw up various lists of possible cabinets, none of which was acceptable to the young Turks 9

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- II. Phoui apparently decided to call the young Turks' bluff, organizing a new cabinet without them.
- III. Main question now is what the young Turks will do next.
 - A. They may still believe they can reenter Phoui's government after the assembly's expiration on 25 December.
 - B. They may bide their time, concentrating on getting an assembly more to their liking returned in the elections now scheduled for April.
 - C. There is also possibility CDNI might attempt a coup with strong army backing it reportedly enjoys.
- IV. In any event this open split in the anti-Communist ranks is likely to detract from the government's efforts to cope with the serious Communist internal threat.

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